



# Shards of Kolkata

a short story mosaic

*- unedited, incomplete version -*

# The Wife's Tale

*by Alice Herzog*

The front door closed with a quiet bang. Even though she could not see through the wood, Safiya stared at the door, wishing he would decide to come back again. She felt dizzy.

It all started when she thought she couldn't stand everything any longer. Her life had been dark: Sanje had changed, since she married him 5 years ago. First she had noticed him looking tired and sick. Then, he had become more and more aggressive and one day he just didn't come home from work. Safiya had called his office. They found him 2 days later. Since then, she knew about his excessive drug consume. She had been overwhelmed and helpless. She had suffered with him. Until she met Shawn Miller. He was a successful british police officer who held a high position at the Kolkata Police Headquarters. Shawn was the best looking man she had ever seen. His heigth, his pale skin and his broad shoulders distinguished him from all the other men. When his eyes had met hers for the first time, it had been so intense that Safiya had blushed. Then he had started visiting her at home, not one visit without flowers.

Now Safiya could not imagine one day without him. Still shaking in excitement, she looked on her watch: It was time to prepare dinner.

She was singing along to the song in the radio as she was cutting the vegetables for dinner. The mixture in the pot looked like a colorful bouquet of blossoming flowers. A smell of curry filled the kitchen as she roasted the chicken.

When the dinner was ready, she noticed that she still had some time. Still humming the song she listened to earlier, she walked out of the sunny kitchen and down the hallway to the huge mirror with the heavy, golden frame she convinced Sanje to place there. Looking at herself in the mirror, Safiya noticed how messy her hair looked and started giggling. She took her hairbrush from the small table in the hallway and started brushing her hair and got lost in thought.

A sudden, loud noise brought her back to the reality. "What was that?", she thought. She felt caught red handed and stood there feeling the guilt running down her body like ice cold rain. As she looked in the mirror again she saw the backdoor open and heard the horrifying scratch of the hinges. It flew open and slammed against the wall and her husband stood in the doorway. Black eyes stared at her out of the dark hollows. His arm was still pushed against the open door. She slowly turned around and glanced at him. One look into his eyes and she was sure: He knew. He was a wolf, observing the lamb, shortly before he attacks.

He walked past her into the kitchen and washed his hands in the sink. His hands moved in slow motion and the sun that came through the window suddenly seemed far away.

During dinner he didn't say a word. The longer he remained silent the colder room felt. Cold sweat gathered in Safiya's palms and ran down her back. It felt like her hands and feet where no longer part of her body and she was surprised to see her hands shake like she had only seen her

husbands shake before.

That night, Safiya was laying in bed, awake. She could feel the looks on her neck and had to pull herself together to not get up and run out of the room, out of this house, however far she needed to get away to be safe. She feared for her life that night.

The only thing she was sure about was that she wouldn't survive if she stayed. There was no possibility he would agree to a divorce, no chance he'd leave her alive, because she cheated. There was not much that mattered to him, but she had hurt one thing that mattered: his honor.

Safiya would have to leave...soon. She thought of her family, her brothers and sisters, she would never see them again. She had no chance of finding a job in Kolkata: A woman without proper education.

There was only one chance: Shawn. "Shawn loves me!", Safiya thought. He would leave his wife and take her somewhere safe. But before she could plan things with him she needed help. She had to go to the police.

It was 4 am in the morning. 4:13, 4:16, 4:18, 4:22...at 4:30 am Safiya couldn't stand it any longer she turned around without making any noise, saw that Sanje was asleep and got up as quiet as possible. Picking the darkest clothes she had she took her purse and the keys and walked out of the door. She decided to take the road along the river Jetty. As she walked she felt her skin prickle under her clothes. Something didn't feel right. Suddenly she noticed the noise of shoes behind her. She started to walk faster, the gap in between the single steps got shorter. There was somebody following her. Safiya's heart felt like one of those cheeses she had eaten once at a french restaurant...She felt like someone had punched holes into it. It was all too much for her. She turned around, but nobody was there. She started running, running as fast as she could, she knew she was getting off the right way but she didn't care. "Just away from everything" she thought and tears poured down her cheeks. When she ran out of breath she stopped next to a main road. Shaking uncontrollably, she turned around, there was a tall man slowly walking towards her. She noticed her heavy breathing.

The silence was interrupted by the noise of an engine: There was a cab approaching at fast speed. Safiya saw her chance to escape. As loud as she could she yelled: "taxi!", and ran onto the street. The cap driver slammed on the brakes and started cursing rudely at her. She opened the door and said with a begging tone: "Please, take me to the police station." The driver glanced at her: "Lady, are you insane? You can't just jump in front of a car!" Safiya sat down in the seat next to him as the tears kept pouring out of her eyes. The driver frowned, little regretting his rude language: "There is no reason to cry. You can't expect people to be nice if you suddenly decide to jump in front of their car...alright, alright, stop crying and I'll take you to the police!". He stepped on the gas pedal and the taxi rushed of. When turning around, Safiya saw that the street was empty. Where did the man go? Was he really there? The cap driver interrupted her thoughts by asking: "What's your story?" Safiya explained: She told him about her marriage 5 years ago, the man she married, who became a drug addict, being without children and how she fell in love with Shawn Miller. How he had given her something worth

living for. The driver showed no understanding. Unbelieving he asked: "You cheated on your husband? The man you promised to honor?" "Yes, but..." "You think you love that guy? And you think you acted correct by cheating on your husband? I assume he found out and that's why you're scared, right?! Whatever he did to you, you deserve it!" "But..." "I don't want to hear anymore!", the driver said, shaking his head.

They drove past Victoria Memorial. It reminded her of Shawn. When she thought about him she imagined him in a black suit and one of those funny english hats. It made her wonder how her life would be now if she'd grown up in a rich english household, wearing pretty dresses in pale pink and blue colors, watching handsome young man playing polo and cricket on the green grass.

"You have reached you're destination", said the cab driver in a very formal polite voice. Safiya gave him a bill and said: "Keep the change!" Why should it matter? It wasn't her money anyway.

Safiya entered the police station at 6 am. It was a relief, here she'd be safe. She walked into a police officer and said: "Excuse me officer, I...". She looked up and noticed that she had run into a police woman. She was a western woman, pale, with light brown her that looked at her with friendly big eyes.

"May I help you?", she asked," you look like you have something on your mind. "Lets go sit down in my office!" Safiya followed her into the office with a modern glass door. The chairs where made put of leather, and the room had air conditioning. The woman offered her a cup of tea and told looked at her. She was inspiring Safiya's confidence and she had told her everything before even knowing her name. The woman remained silent. Then she asked: "You said his name was Shawn? Shawn Miller?" "Yes!", Safiya confirmed. The woman looked at her like she was deeply sorry. After a while she started talking: "Safiya, I know this must be very hard for you, but I think your only way out of this is to leave the city. I know the traditions here, I know it is very difficult. Do you understand?" "Yes, I know I need to leave. I need to talk to Shawn.." "Wait. There is something we need to talk about." "About Shawn?" "Yes I am desperately sorry Safiya..." and she started telling Safiya the truth about Shawn. Shawn, who cheated on his wife. Shawn, who dealt with drugs. Shawn, who was corrupt in any possible way. Shawn, who had never loved her. Safiya felt hot, like she was burning from the inside. She didn't have anymore tears, she had lost everything in just one day. The environment blurred and Safiya started falling, she was falling deep.

Then, the woman talked to her. She said something about everything going to be "ok", about coming back the next day with her stuff and she told her her name -Theresa Fürst... Safiya nodded. Then she stood up and started moving towards the door like a sleepwalker. She didn't notice anything around her, she didn't even remember how she got home later.

She stood in the hallway, it was cryptically dark as if the noises of the street had gone somewhere else. In the silence she could only feel that something was moving at the end of the hallway. "Safiya". The cold air bursted under his dark growling voice. She could feel him approach and suddenly his path was illuminated. The light caused her eyes great pain. She felt

herself stumble. And then her head hit the mirror and it sounded like a cay pigeon being hit by a bullet. Safiya spotted green dots all over her eyeballs and the outside world was shut out by a high pitched tone as she landed on the floor. The shards on the floor around her sang a tingling beautiful song. Along with the song pain was spreading over her stomach. Gasping for air she teared her eyes open.

And the last thing she saw in life was an infernal mask of madness.

## **The Convict's Tale / The Revenge**

*by Martin Pawelek*

"You killed somebody!" Officer Miller says and looks angry on Ahmed, who doesn't realize that the police man means it for real. Officer Miller takes him into a hard clutch and asks:" You are Ahmed Al-Massalah right? And you killed somebody last night in the industry district, right?" Ahmed suddenly gets that it's for real and answers fearfully:" Yes I am... But... No! I didn't! I was studying for my exam next week. I'm going to be a big banker, why should I kill somebody?" Officer Miller doesn't give up and asks him, if he got Witnesses with knowing that he doesn't. Ahmed just says:" No, why should I have witnesses when I'm learning at home?" The police-man has reached his aim and puts Ahmed into a cell. Ahmed tries to free himself out of this situation, but it doesn't work. Officer Miller goes to another room, where nobody is able to hear him. He takes out his mobile-phone, dials a number and waits. Suddenly he says:" I've made my work, now it's Ranjid's job to fulfill the circle.... Yes, I got him here.... What? We agreed on 150.000 rupees!....Okay, but I want my money.... Bye."

Two Weeks later at the High-court. " You killed him, right? You killed Mr. Avinash! The evidences are clear! You don't have witnesses and the evidences we found, are from you! " Ahmed can't do anything. He's suppressed by the law. When saying anything, the judge interrupts him and says something else. After discussing with his advisers the judge pronounces Ahmed to 11 years in the Alipore Jail without probation.

Sitting in the jail, Ahmed searches for any reason why he got into jail without doing anything. And Suddenly it comes into his head. The police-man who wrote the report said on the phone that Ranjid has to fulfill the circle. How could he be so stupid. He should have realized it already at the beginning. The name of the judge was Ranjid Khan! Ahmed is very angry and plans his revenge. He lost everything in his life. His bank-job, his friends, even his family is not interested in him.

After eleven years Ahmed gets out of jail and is ready to take revenge. From some men in jail he knows about a meeting the judge and the police man will have with a third man from the big Cankun-Mafia. Ahmed buys some weapons in a small backstreet and prepares himself for the revenge. And then comes the day. Ahmed already stands in the middle of the Howrah Bridge when the three men came. When seeing Ahmed, all three take out their weapons and aim on Ahmed. But he already has his gun in his hand and starts shooting. The three are very surprised and the first one gets hit. Shawn Miller, the police-man gets hit in his chest and dies

immediately. The judge and the Mafia-man hide behind a pillar. Ahmed runs in their direction and shoots around himself. When doing this he hits the judge which dies, too. There are only Ahmed and the Mafia-man left. Standing face to face, aiming on each other Ahmed says: "You damn bastard. Why do you do things like that? My life doesn't make sense because of you so I'm gonna end it. But you go with me!" Two shots fell and everything was silent.

## **The Manager's Tale**

*by Stefanie Kouros*

I'm Rahim Hamid, a 26 years old Muslim man. Together with my parents I live in Kolkata for a couple of years now. My mother is a housewife and my father a businessman. I'm the manager of our own hotel HH, Hotel Hamid and it is a symbol of our vicinity for me. If you're thinking of a reason, which could make me write about a passage of my life, it was my very best friend Cabbie. I owe it. He saved my life, so I try to give the world an impression how big the loss of him is.

Before I get to the real drama, everything started with my father's plans of setting up his own hotel, which finally led us to the relocation from Kashmir to Kolkata as Kolkata is a more modern city with much more tourists. Self-confidently we stood in front of the budding commencement. We were sure everything would be just as well as in Kashmir for us or even better, because rich people are always lucky. But when we arrived we noticed that it wouldn't be as easy as we thought. Judging sights full of hate and prejudice reminded us of the Muslim-Hindu conflicts we totally had forgotten in Kashmir as there were predominantly Muslim people. Being the only Muslim family in this area, surrounded by Hindus, just did not make the new start in Kolkata easier. Rumors have been invented and we were not given any chances to introduce ourselves to them and show them that we are human beings just like them. The first couple of weeks we tried to be inconspicuous and to acclimatize, which was a considerable contrast to our living back in Kashmir. It was like a sudden alteration from popularity to unpopularity for us and made us feel alone. That's when we decided to prove ourselves by establishing Hotel Hamid. We wanted to start a new life and open our own hotel in a new city without being integrated in the new community in that new city.

In spite of all these challenges in our new everyday life, my father went to his boss, Mr. Mohammed to cancel his contract and tell him that he wants to start his own business and leave Kashmir. I accompanied my father because I wanted to see his working place, I've never been there before. Since I didn't want to annoy the both of them I just sat outside Mr. Mohammed's office. Even so I could hear and see everything through the glassy walls. I was questioning myself how he would react because he knows that my father is the best manager in this area.

When my father met Mr. Mohammed everything seemed to be calm and peaceful just as if

there was nothing between those two men. Mr. Mohammed accepted my fathers resign but nevertheless my father knew that he didn't take it as easy as he acted.

He said: 'Well Mr. Hamid if you are sure about leaving this well-paid job then just go ahead and do it!' I think he reacted this way because he didn't know the whole truth about this story or maybe he is just too naive? Well, I don't know but as my father told him about our plan to leave Kashmir and move to Kolkatta for our own hotel he respond agitated and mad. He said something like: 'What do you little manage man think who you are? Do you want to be a rival for ME?! You will never reach my success so you don't even need to try!'

My father was shocked like he just saw a dead body. He couldn't believe that Mr. Mohammed who was always more a friendly boss, and a nice and quiet man reacted this way. It seemed like a new facet of his mysterious character.

Suddenly he said: 'Mr. Hamid are you sure about your idea? Are you sure that you want competition with me?!'

My father respond: 'Mr. Mohammed I'm sorry if I disappointed you but I need a new perspective a new aim. I can't live any longer in this routine I need a business by my own I hope you can understand me and I don't want any competitions or fights with you. I don't even think that we are rivals, our hotels are in different areas so there won't be any problems trust me!'

Mr Mohammed replied: 'Hmm..maybe you are right...alright then I wish you good luck'.

You are going to need it, he whispered. My father was never naive but this time he erred. As soon as we left the hotel Mr. Mohammed did a phone call. Sean: 'Hello, assassin center?'

Anis : 'Hi Sean, it's me Anis Yousef, I got a job for you, do you know my old manager Hamid?'

Sean: 'Oh yes I know whom you mean. What do you want me to do? Should i arrange some men to beat him up or do you want him to disappear completely?'

Anis : 'I need you to kidnap his son I think this is going to hurt him more than his own death. And I don't care what you do to his son I just want this cheater to see with whom he takes on he should understand that he doesn't have any chance against Anis Yousef Mohammed.'

Sean: 'Alright Mr. Mohammed I'm going to arrange something for you....'

Then, my time has come. I felt like being in danger, but without knowledge about how it will happen to me. That day I had a talk to my teachers, which caused me to be pretty late. I walked down the empty road towards my home. Even though it was afternoon, the whole way home was shadowed by a scary, humid, fog-like darkness. It made me walk faster than I do usually. Stupid grades !! If I hadn't receive the F in physics, I wouldn't have had to talk to my teachers. So my mood was according to this. I decided to take the shorter way home. And this was my biggest fault:

The shorter way goes through small alleys and at the end over a kind of cemetery of our slum. It's more like a disposal for unknown cadavers and thats the way it smelled.

So, I went right in the alley between the shaver/barber and our local pub. Nobody is living

there. No windows, no doors, just wall. Right there I heard a clacking noise coming nearer to me. It sounded like the pecking of “Woody Woodpecker” but it wasn't. I start running away. Everything has gone so fast. The noise was also getting faster like I did. It was a pretty long way home, so I had to walk a long distance everyday. From that point, it was still 5 miles to my home. I ran as fast as I can, but the sound came closer, so I turned around to find out what it was. And there he stand, I saw a man I have never seen before. He was wearing a black suit, and in his right hand he hold a knife.

I was a bad runner. I did not have a technique for running as fast as possible and I also wasn't fit. I have never been good in athletics. In school, my sports teacher wanted me to stay away when we started the term about athletics. So you see how untalented I am.

The man in the suit was coming nearer. I was just thinking about how I could get out of this trouble. The next alley towards the main road of Ultadanga was far away and my breath was running out. So I need another idea to get away from him. But I don't know the slums that good, that I can shake off the pursuer. God damn it, what shall I do, was my first thought. But then I have seen a small cab driving towards me. I was thinking if it was the solution of rescuing my life or if it is a tactic of the pursuer to bring me in a kind of blind alley. I was confused: the cab driver switched on the headlights and accelerated. I saw my life passing by like I was watching a movie. I had no control over my body. It was like being on crack. The adrenalin was pumped through all parts of my body, my heart was pumping harder than ever before and my lungs hurt because of running that fast. The cab came closer and the pursuer too. The man was that near, I could feel his breath in my neck. Suddenly my mind was getting totally crazy. It reminded me on “Forest Gump” who was running and running and running even if he was on a leg splint. I really felt like that one moment, but then I noticed the headlights of the cab growing like the stomach of Michael Moore. I actually was of the opinion that my life is finished now, but in that moment the cab driver looked out of his window and started shouting in Hindi. He told me to jump on the cowl of the cab. I was really confused, but my legs were faster in doing that than my brain was thinking of how to do so. I landed behind the cab and the pursuer also tried to jump over, but the cab driver accelerated again and ran him down. I did not realize what happened to the pursuer, so I ran to the cab driver who was just panic braking his car. He opened the door and took me home. I was happy of having that much luck in a situation which seemed hopeless. The cab driver talked to me about that what happened before. I don't know how to express myself and my feeling in that moment, but this story brought me a new friend. Cabbie was his name and he saved my life! He said he heard me screaming but I couldn't even remember any scream. Usually nobody reacts on a screaming but Cabbie did he felt that something was wrong and I really thank want to thank you for that Cabbie !

When I told dad that story he was really thankful. He wanted to do something good for Cabbie so he hired Cabbie as a driver for his special guests and V.I.P.'s. Every day, Cabbie drove me to school with a limousine and told me stories about his childhood of him or his children. And we also had a ritual: Before going in to lesson, Cabbie told me a joke to ensure me having a good mood. Now Cabbie died and I am 26 years old. Today I am able to say that I couldn't imagine a



better friend than him.

## **The Police Officer's Tale / The Will to Help**

*by Jacqueline Krell*

I always wanted to help everyone. In kindergarten I protected my girlfriends from the „bad boys“ who wanted to them up. In high school I helped people to get off dugs.

As a policewoman in Germany my need to help other people was never fully satisfied. The longings and problems of the people irritated me. I was looking for real problems so I decided I wanted to go to India, where help is needed much more. My boss gave me permission to go there for three months and gain experience. But it wasn't what I expected...

The orange and yellow sea of flowers which I got to see at the flower market was amazing and I wondered how they resisted the 42°C of heat. It was May, the hottest season in Kolkata and I just had arrived there by passing the *Kazi Nazrul Islam Sarani*, a busy thoroughfare connecting the city with the *Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose International Airport*. The few last yards to my new office *Kolkata Police Headquarters* in the Lal Bazar Street 40 placed in the same-named district Lal Bazar I took by tram.

My first impression was a positive one. The smart Officer Shawn Miller was the first one I got to know at my new workplace. He opened a red wooden door and we entered in a light-flooded, bright, little office. There was dust on the *escritoire* which testified that there hasn't worked anyone in here for a long time but anyhow it exuded a positive aura. The fact that he then closed this red wooden door behind me and locked it with something in his face I wasn't able to interpret at that point destroyed this aura in one second.

“Doff your pants and turn around!” The skin colour yield out of my face and I must have looked really befuddled and stupid-looking because he began to laugh out loud.” Okay sweetie I'm just joking but starting from now you have to be very careful, you're in India. There won't be anyone to protect you in the dark street behind the next corner when you're on the beat. Well, just take your time now to arrange yourself in here. I'll call you for other instructions later on. So be careful honey and see you.” He winked at me and left room but there still was something curious in his voice I would never trust in.

I stood in the middle of the room and could not believe what just happened to me.

It felt like sweat was coming out of every single pore of my body. My blue uniform was at least two numbers too big and also didn't ameliorate the situation. We (Officer Sanje Gupta and me) were on the beat to the flower market at the river. To get the real India he was supposed to

show me the slums over there. It was the fetidness which told me that we were on the way to arrive. The people stared at me when we passed. I obviously could not hide my european ancestry. A little girl, maybe 10 or 11 years old, with a beat-up, dirty, white shirt, she was wearing as a dress, striated my hand and with an expression in her eyes I still remember. They told me the story of a life which should not have been undergone by such a young and vulnerable child. A life which no one, not even a criminal, should live. Full of abuse, injustice and without any perspective to escape. The life in the slums.

Later on I got to know that her name was Rangana which means “happy” but the scars on her body and her soul told me another story. I also called her the girl with the Stockholm syndrome because she could not really realize the bad things her father did to her. Nevertheless she loved him and told me that she was supposed to do it to avoid that he gets angry. I gave her my business card so that she could call on me if she wanted to. She came once, after this I never saw her again...

## **The Terrorist's Tale**

*by Julia Greichgauer*

„Hello, my name is Ram Patil and I was kidnapped by a terror group. “

I’m sitting on a chair, the spotlight shines right in my face and I have to screw up my eyes if I want to see the people around me. All cameras are focused on me. I don’t feel well. It is very hot in here because of the spotlight. I’m sweating and feeling terrible. I only want to forget what happened and go home even if I don’t have a home any more.

“Hello Mr. Patil or is it okay if I say Ram? I think you don’t mind right?!” I can’t answer because the talk-master, Narayn Sanjib, simply goes on without waiting for my answer. “So Ram, our topic today is your experience with the terror group which kidnapped you. We all are curious, so please tell me and our viewers your experience with this terror group. How does this all happened? And why? How do you feel? Tell us everything!”

It’s getting quiet in the studio and everyone look at me.

It was a Saturday night where everything changed and I remember it if I was yesterday. I was sleeping in my bed right next to my wife. In the room next to mine, my children also slept innocently but then everything happened so fast that it is hard to remember.

Three men with guns ran into our house and pulled me out of my bed. They shouted that my wife should go to the children and run because then, they said, nothing happened to them. My wife looked at me. I could see the tears in her eyes but I shouted at her that she have to take the kids and run. This was the last time I saw her. I pray every day that they survived this night

and everything is okay with them. This uncertainty is worse than what happened to me later on.

“Sorry to interrupt you but you wanted to tell us how it was to get kidnapped by the terror group and not what happened to your family because you don’t even know today!”

“Yes I'm sorry.” I look at the floor and try to remember everything. But there are so many gaps in my memories.

They pushed me in a transporter and then it was getting darker than it already was. They put a bandage over my eyes because they didn't want me to remember anything I may see from the landscape which I may use against them when they set me free. On this point of the journey I didn't know what they wanted with me. I thought that I have to die and never see my family again.

I was sweating because I was afraid of this situation and my family. It was a nerve-racking situation and I lost any sense of time and space while I sat in this transporter. In this endless time I tried to summarize all I knew right now for oriented me in this difficult situation:

I was in a transporter with about 3 to 4 men with guns. I heard nothing because the men didn't talk and outside of the transporter it seemed to be quiet too. It could also be that I couldn't hear anything because the transporter is too loud. Who knows?

There was a concrete road but then we change on a road which isn't a road, I guess. It could be pathway which is only known by the terrorists. I think that some sand grains are blown inside by the wind but it also could only be dust from the inside of the transporter. Who knows? My eyes were bonded so I couldn't be sure.

I also remembered that it was getting hotter inside of the transporter after a time that felt like eternity. That means that we drove the whole night and because of the sunrise it was getting hotter.

After this eternity, which I survived by sitting there and trying not to be noticed, the transporter stopped and the terrorists bring me into their hiding place, I guess. I could still see nothing because of the bandage. When we entered the building, or whatever, they put the bandage down, but I don't see much more then with the bandage because inside there was only dimmed light.

“Yes that's really nice but can you slowly come to the point?!”

The voice of the talk-master pulls me back into the present. The shrill spotlight stands in a big contrast to the dimmed light I remember from the hiding place of the terrorists and I have to screw up my eyes again. Also the silent that was in my head when I was thinking about the past is not there anymore because the audience are whispering with each other. I look around until my eyes stop at the face of the talk- master who wants to say me with his eyes that I have to go

on.

They pushed me in a room and locked the door. I was alone now. I was afraid of what happened next and about my family. I prayed again that my wife and my children are okay but I never knew if they really are. This uncertainty is still killing me from the inside.

They left me alone for more than one hour, I guess. After a time one of the terrorists came back. I was shocked who entered the door. It was the leader of the Hindu warriors who I once belonged to. I never thought that my past would catch up with me.

I didn't know how many years it was ago because I buried these memories very deep in my head. I never wanted to be remembered of this part of my life because it was the darkest part.

It was a time long before I got to know this beautiful girl who I married later. I was very young and easily influenced. It was at a time where one of the dozens 'wars' between the Hindu and the Muslim take place. The Hindu warriors had won me very easy and used me for their purposes. First I was a 'normal' warrior as all the others but the leaders quickly saw that I satisfy conditions for being a marksman and they wanted to train some of the men to marksmen so they also chose me. I was young and naive and I thought that I did the right thing when I killed a Muslim. At this time I didn't really think about what I was doing.

When the 'war' ended I realized that this isn't a good job, even if I was good in it, because what I did was wrong. I started to work in a hospital to help ill people, who could die, to stay alive. I think I wanted to do penance by doing this. There I also met this beautiful girl, my wife.

"Sorry Ram but you digress from the topic again! Tell us more about the mysterious leader. Everyone wants to hear that." He laughs and looks at the audience who also start to laugh and applaud the talk-master.

He came into my prison and welcomed me as if no time elapsed. It was the same authoritative man who he was years ago when I was the naive young man who he influenced and used for his purposes. His strong eyes looked straight into mine when he told me why I was there. He told me that I was the best marksman they ever had and that they wanted me for one last assignment because I still owed them something. They wanted me to kill a successful Muslim politician. He also said that if I refused they would kill me and I never see my family again. He smiled but I knew that the words he said are meant serious. He never joked.

"Finally it's getting interesting ladies and gentlemen!" The talk-master smiles and looks around in the studio. The audience laugh but then it's getting quiet and the whole attention is paining on me again.

In the following days the leader came back some times and reminded me on my assignment. He also told me all the details about it. When he was there I played the naive man who he influenced again, but when I was alone I doubted because I swore myself that I would never do things like this again.

Luckily for me was that the leader bought my story of the still naive man, so I had much time for thinking about how I could escape.

The best possibility was to continue to play my role because then they would bring me to Kolkata and there I could escape more easily.

So the day, when they wanted me to run my job, came. They put the bondage over my eyes again and brought me in a transporter. Maybe the leader didn't trust me yet even if he bought my story. I hoped he bought it because if not it would be more difficult to escape without hurting someone.

The ride to Kolkata was even longer then the ride from my home to the hiding place of the Hindu terror group. It was very boring even if I was a bit nervous because of my plan to escape but I tried not to dissemble.

When we arrived in Kolkata one of the men put my bandage down and pulled me out of the transporter. They stopped with the car in a very small alley because they didn't want anyone to see them, I guess. After I got out of the transporter with one of the terrorist, the transporter drove away. I had not expected this situation. I thought they would let me do my job alone. Now I had to change my plan a bit.

The terrorist brought me on the roof of a building next to the Diamond-Hotel where the Muslim politician should be. He didn't talk to me at all but that was quiet good for me because I could concentrate on my plan.

When we arrived on the roof he gave me a bag with my gun. I went to the edge of the roof and sat down. The terrorist was all the time right behind me, I thought that could be a problem for me but I could not think about this now because first I had to keep up appearances.

I put the bag down right next to me on the floor and started to arrange everything for my assignment. Trough my binoculars I could see the forecourt of the hotel. In about 10 minutes the politician had to come out of the hotel so I only had to wait.

It was very quiet in the studio. The attention of the audience is all on me. Some of them look a bit shocked because of my story but I don't really care about this.

"Go on please!" The talk-master also looks a bit excited and gesticulates that I should go on.

After exactly 10 minutes something stirred on the forecourt of the hotel. Many police-officers stood on the street or sat in their cars and waited for the politician, I guess. Through my binoculars I observed the situation on the forecourt of the hotel. One of the police-officers caught my attention, not because she looked very dangerous or something like this, no she caught my attention because she looked so different. I thought she could not be from here, she didn't look very Indian. I never saw a woman like her. I compared her to my wife and then I was back, the feeling. I had to think of my wife and my children. Were they okay? The hole in my heart was back and hurt a lot but I couldn't allow me this weakness now because I had to concentrate if I wanted to see my family ever again. I shook my head to banish these thoughts out of my head for the moment. When all this is over I would have enough time to think about my family and how I get them back.

Then everything happened very fast. Some men in black suits came out of the hotel and right behind them, or more in the middle of them, was the politician. I took my binoculars away and looked through the binoculars of the gun. My plan was not to kill the politician, but I had to shoot anyway because I needed a distraction for the man behind me because he also had a gun and the order to kill me if I didn't run my job.

My hands were wet because I was so nervous. I hoped that I didn't hit anyone. And then I target on the ground next to the politician. I closed my eyes and prayed one last time for my family and that everything goes well. Then I opened my eyes and shot.

After that a chaos broke out. The men in the black suits and the police-officers rallied more closely around the politician. The terrorist behind me went to the edge of the roof and look through his binoculars because he wanted to be sure that I didn't fail. This second I used to put my plan into action. Of course I failed because I wanted it and as the terrorist realized that and turned round to me, I was ready to hit him. I kicked his gun out of his hand and then I knocked him out. That was my chance to escape. I ran downstairs and then out of the building. The chaos out there had not changed and so I could disappear very easy in the crowd.

"Wow that was exciting." The audience applause again, but this time for me and not for the talk-master. I smile about that although I am not in the mood to laugh. My family is still missing.

After a few weeks in which I hid me anywhere in Kolkata I thought it would be save enough to go home and look for my family. With the bus I rode to my home village but when I arrived at my house it was abandoned. My family wasn't there and I had no idea where they could be. My next thought was that the terrorist have killed them even if I went with them or they came back and killed them after I disappeared. I was really worried about them and made myself big reproaches because I put them into danger. I felt the tears in my eyes but I wanted to be strong and did not want to admit that they could be dead. I went to the small police-office in our village and wanted to know from the police-officers if there were murders lately. The police-officer looked at me really shocked but then he laughed and asked me how I could think that. I

laughed too because of the relief. I apologized for my question and went out of the office. I still didn't have any idea where they could be but I could more or less be sure that they are alive. I decided to go back to Kolkata and search there for them.

Kolkata was only a few hours away so it is possible that they went there because in the small village it is very hard to hide. In Kolkata I also went to many police-departments and asked for murders but nothing about a dead woman and two children.

"That was a very touching story Ram. It felt like I was there too when you are in this adventure. Incredible. Applause ladies and gentlemen for our friend Ram." The talk-master applause and the audience do the same. I feel terrible again. This applause sounds more artificial than real. No one of these people can imagine what I went through.

"And now Ram my final question, how do you get in this show?"

After another week I slowly despaired because I could not find them. I sat on the stairs of one of the dozens police-departments when a man came and talk to me. He said that I look so sad and he wanted to know why. I didn't really know why I told him my whole story, I think because it felt good to talk to somebody, but fact is I did it. It turned out that the man is an English reporter and author. His name is Mr. Williams. I didn't know why he wanted to help me, but fact is he offered me his help. He wanted to help me to find my family.

"And today I am here to tell my story in the TV because Mr. Williams thought this is a good idea to increase my opportunities to find my family."

"Yes that's true and here, ladies and gentlemen, is the man why Ram is here. Here is Mr. Thomas Williams." Everyone applause.

The talk-master now asks Mr. Williams some questions about himself, his job and why he wants to help me. I don't really care about the things they are talking about and so I only listen with half of an ear to what they are saying. I am tired and only want to go home, wherever this is, and go to bed, but then something, I never expect, happens. The audience applause again and a door opens and behind this door is...My wife. I cannot believe it! I jump up from my chair and start to run because I had missed her so much and now I only want to hug her because I am so happy to see her. She also starts to run and hug me when she reaches me. Over the shoulder of my wife and see Mr. Williams smiling at me. He seemed to be happy too. While I am still hugging my wife, I hear Mr. Williams explaining the audience:

"With the help of my assistants I finally his wife a few hours ago and brought her directly here."

# The Cabdriver's Tale

by

An Indian Cab driver, his name is Revird Bak, he is 58 years old and has cancer since a few weeks, in his youth he was a slumdog and dreamed from the big money, mostly he is helpful to all his passengers, he has no wife or kids and has a huge life experience.

Revird sits in a pub with his friend and tells him about his strange, stressful and so long day.

“First I had this strange guy sitting in the back who was always squirrely and couldn’t sit still for a minute...(drinks)... he was talking about a revenge for his family. After a while I got out what he planed to do and that he was blinded by rage. I tried to convince him to think about this problem and that he shouldn’t kill someone, because there is always an other way to solve the situation and that no one, absolutly no one has the right to decide about life and death of another human beeing. When we were waiting at the traffic there was this young college kid that just jumped into my cab without saying anything and just looked at us ... (drinks)... The Passenger who was first in the Cab didn’t say anything so I asked the new passenger where he wants to get off. He thought a few seconds and said just a few blocks away from this place. The young kid mumbled something like:” I hate judges” and the two passengers started a conversations about judges and that they are the worst at the planet. I was so confused about the situation at first that I didn’t say anything and just drove the first passenger to his destination. When we arrived there both of them got off. I waited at this point for a few minutes to get my mind clear again and tried to understand what just happened to me. This was so strange to me because most of the time I talk to my passengers and can help them. Not this time ... (drinks)... I started the engine again and wanted to go back to work when this woman opened the door and jumped into my car. She said her destination and started to talk about cheating on his partner is not good in any way. I agreed and started to talk also about my life that I didn’t had a woman but that I loved to have one. She just cheated on her partner and thought how she could say it to him and if she should say something to him. I assured to her that it is always the best to be truthful to the partner and that she should say something to him and try to explain the whole story. I said that no person in the world is perfect and that he maybe would understand the situation when she regret this. When we arrived she looked relieved and happy. This was as normal passenger as always ... (drinks)... After her I saw I fight on the street between a black gang and one white guy. I stopped the Cab in front of them and hit a few times the horn. I couldn’t get off the car because I was wearing my thick glasses they would laugh about me and didn’t be afraid. They stopped hitting the white person and he hobbled to my car and sat down on the backseat. His bleeding chest colures my backseats red. I drove in the direction of the hospital where I also had to get my results from my cancer test. I asked him what happened and he started to tell his story that he feels black since he was young



but no one respected him and today he tried again to be in the group but they just laughed about him.”

Revird kept talking and talking about his day. But his friend was used to it and mostly even enjoys listening to Revirds more or less everyday stories. When

He nearly told him every detail about his day they decided to go home. Mr. Bak tries to start the engine of his cab but nothing happens. Nothing.

## **The Drug Dealer's Tale / Trust no one except yourself**

*by Mario Cignola*

It was 25. July 2005 a warm but rainy day. It was a difficult and exhausting day for Shawn and in the evening he was standing under the shower. He felt the hot water running down his body and was thinking about the past day. The clock showed 8 pm, no 8:01 pm; no 8:02 pm. Shawn Miller had any sense of time. But he knew that the water couldn't be hot enough to wash the guilt of his body. He never had another choice in his life. There was never another way to survive in this town. Shawn lives in Kolkata, in College Street. It is the street of the rich people there, but he works in the slums every day. He saw the misery but in this town everybody is on his own and it is eat or be eaten.

He understood this a long time ago to be exact when Shawn was twelve. You have to know he came to Kolkata when he was eight years old. He came with his mother, she was a beautiful woman and thought she could find her love in this town but she was wrong. It was five days after Shawn's 12th birthday, maybe he was not the happiest kid but he had everything to live. He was on the way to buy some food with his mother at the Mallick Ghat Flower Market not far from their apartment. He was standing at a fruit stand and bought some food while his mother wanted to go on the other side of the road but there she never arrived. She was knocked down on the street and the asshole just drove away without an eye twitch. It was the worst day of Shawn's life and until this day he wanted to become a policeman so that such a thing never happened again.

But things have changed he had realized that he cannot change anything in this town. They are far too few police officers in Kolkata and Shawn's "partner" Sanjay is a druggie bum. You cannot rely on him, so if they have a mission let you never give back cover from him, because he could shoot you by mistake. He doesn't understand anything and it gets more and more worst, maybe because Shawn is the guy who sells him the drugs. Doesn't matter. He did not even realize that Shawn sleeps since three years with his wife Safiya. She's a woman with clear ideas and she knows what she wants. She wants sex and that's what Shawn can give her.

That day began at eight am when Shawn came in the office. Sanjay was already there and also a young woman. She told Shawn that her name is Teresa Fürst and she was added to this department because of Foreign exchange. So there she was a beautiful, fascinating 26 year-old

German. Shawn never knew that German women were so attractive. Even more attractive than Indian ones.

He showed her the office and then a police colleague asked him for a raid. Teresa asked me whether she could come with, but I told that it could be too dangerous. She was not satisfied with a “no” and Shawn had realized what a kind of woman she really was. So he took her with. She sat down next to him in the car and although she was wearing this ugly police uniform her body looked bombastic in it. He never saw someone that suited this uniform so much.

On the way to the mission they talked about her life, but Shawn couldn't memorize anything because he was only able to concentrate on her lips. The mission took them to Armenian Street, a dark deserted street next to the slums. Their missions always take them to the slums. But he never had a female police officer with him always just Sanjay or other idiots. That's the reason why he was a little bit worried, but Teresa diffused his fears in the moment they stepped in the suspect house. They could not even say “This is the Police, get your hands in the air” when guns already were pointed at Shawn and Teresa. They were about eight men standing in front of us and they were just two police officers. Thus, a weapons art Shawn had never seen before. Teresa said that when she counts to three Shawn had to shelter right behind a wall next to them. She counted one, two, and three. And Shawn jumped right in the shelter, although Shawn doesn't know Teresa very well he trusted her blindly. Teresa in contrast started to shoot the guys and then jumped in the shelter next to him. It was so fast that Shawn couldn't realize that she shot down four of the eight bastards. The other four were paralyzed because of the fast shots, even Shawn. The other four arised defenseless. Shawn told Teresa that she could go to the car. He stayed in the suspect house and examined the building. He found a room in the house where maybe 20 kg Cocaine were. They put the four guys in prison for 15 kg and five kg Shawn put in his pocket for Sanjay and the other druggies.

It was half past eleven when Shawn gets out of the shower. His wife already sleeps. Her name is Zuleyka and she's a beautiful woman, but Shawn was bored with just one woman in his life. He was not made for that.

Shawn's phone began to ring. At the other end a distorted voice began to talk. The voice told Shawn that he should come to the abandoned warehouse next to the flower market and if he does not he would never see his wife again. Shawn ran in the bedroom and hoped that his wife would lie in the bed but she did not. Zuleyka wasn't there and Shawn collapsed on the floor. But in the next moment he stood up and took his gun. He drove to the flower market so fast like never before and less than 5 minutes later he was at the old warehouse. He was afraid of this situation but he loved his wife and knew that he had to go in this warehouse.

He stepped in and saw Zuleyka standing at the other end of the warehouse. In this moment he was relieved but Zuleyka raised her arm and Shawn couldn't believe what there was in her hand. It was a gun and obviously she was willing to kill him. That was not all, because when Shawn looked a bit at the right side in the dark he saw a second person. It was Safiya and she

told Zuleyka about the affair with his husband. You could see the hatred and the grief in Zuleyka's eyes. A tear ran down her cheek and she pulled the trigger of the gun. Shawn collapsed and a huge pool of blood spread on the floor. She had shot him right in the heart. Zuleyka turned around and shot Safiya right in her head because she did not deserve to live. The last of the series was she and she ended her own life which made no sense without Shawn anymore. On this day, the old warehouse turned into a place full of blood, betrayal and contempt.

## **The Talk Show Host's Tale**

*by Sandro Calabruso*

India is warm. India is big. India is exciting. If you make it here you can make it anywhere. But for many people India is getting too warm and too big.

Narayan Sanjib is a 34-year-old Indian talk show host. But not just an ordinary talk show host. Not just an off-the-shelf talk show host you can find anywhere on TV at any time. When he talks in his show he is talking like a hunting lion who is searching for his prey. And the people love him for that.

Twice a week Sanjib presents his show „Talking to Narayan“ on prime time, live from his studio in Kolkata. He talks about politics, sports, makes fun about Indian VIPs and criticizes Indian films and music. The Indian people love his allround talent. For them he is the reincarnation of Salman Rushdie, Mohammed Rafi, Amitabh Bachchan and Norman Pritchard. into a new person.

He is married to Amika Bhadra, a 30-year-old beauty from Kolkata for three years. They have got two sons, Salim and Ranjid.

He is successful, popular, has got a beautiful wife and two children. But behind his curtain of money and popularity Sanjib covers a dark secret.

From Sanjib's house you can hear the screams of pain and the sounds of fear by his wife: „Help! Help! Stop hitting me! Help!“ - „Shut up you slut!“. Through the exterior walls crying of children can be perceived. Everyday Sanjib's internal lion breaks out. And it breaks out like an unstoppable hurricane.

„I don't want to live on this way!“, Bhadra says to her neighbour Harish Ikshu. „He consumes drugs and he gets so aggressive. I don't know what I should do. He's abusing me and hitting the kids. But I'm too scared to leave him. He's unpredictable!“

Ikshu listens to her and he knows that he has to do something because Bhadra hasn't got a chance to get out of her situation. So he decides to hire a private detective to convict Sanjib and to fetch the lion and bring it back to its cage.

The lion tamer should be Keitero Fugukawe. The 35-year-old private detective is underrated,

underpaid but one of the best in his field. "Just abide by the facts and your instincts. There is nothing else you can do." he says. So he starts his investigation, searching for the lion who hides in the shadow of popularity and wealth.

Sanjib knows about his fame and his golden life. "The only one on my level is Gandhi, and no one else. I know everything, the people love me and nobody is able to stand in my way to Indian heaven. And my wife has to obey! Otherwise she has to take the consequences."

To fetch the lion Fugukawe needs the witness statement from Bhadra. To get these he waits in front of Sanjib's house until he goes. Then he walks to the door and rings:

„Hello Miss Bhadra, I'm Keitero Fugukawe and I'm private detective.“

„So, what do you want from me?“, she asks.

„Your neighbour Harish Ikshu contacted me two days ago. He said that your husband would abuse you and hit your children, is that true?“

„Mister Ikshu called you? But why did he do that? I never said that he should do that!“, she speaks loudly.

„He said that you wouldn't know what you should do and that you are scared because of your husband. And if it's true your neighbour did the right decision. I'm here to help you. So, one more time. Is it true?“

„...Yes ... Yes, it is true“, she speaks with an anxious voice. „It's like hell for me. Pain almost everyday. He hits the children and I can't do anything. He doesn't know what he does when he consumes his drugs. And I'm scared that he kills me when I leave him.“

„Your husband consumes drugs? What drugs?“

„I don't know! It is some kind of powder.“

„And where is he now? How much time do we have until he'll come back?“

„Now he practices for his show. Normally he'll be back in three hours.“

„So may I come in? But if you agree I will start my investigation.“

„... Okey, I agree.“

Fugukawe enters the house and searches for evidence to convict the popular TV star.

„Do you know where he hides his drugs?“, he asks.

„Yes I know the place. On the cupboard. The children are too small to reach the top of it. And he knows that I'm too scared to take it.“

Fugukawe finds the drugs on the cupboard.

„I'm going to take them with me.“

„But maybe he'll even kill me.“

„Even better.“

„What?!”

„I cannot catch him without a proper reason. Of course the consuming of drugs is a delinquency but it will take a long lawsuit to take him into prison. But with an attempted murder we could get him here and now and you can be sure, he'll be arrested immediately.”

„So what is your plan?”

„I already called two police officers. We will wait and hide in front of your door until your husband comes back. He'll be aggressive when he won't find the drugs. And that will be our time. What about your children?”

„Please take them out with you as well!”

„Alright!”

Fugukawe, the policewoman Theresa Fürst and the policeman Sanjay Gupta hide in front of the house and wait until the right moment. The two children sit safely in the police car. After three hours Sanjib comes back, enters his house and wants to take his drugs from the cupboard immediately.

„Where is my powder?”, he asks his wife.

„I don't know.”, she answers.

„Last chance you dirty bitch! You were the only person in the house when I was away. And the children are too small to get the powder from the cupboard! So, where is it?!”

„I don't know!”, she screams.

„You silly woman! I was very kind to you so far. But now that will change!”

Sanjib takes a knife from the kitchen. He takes it like a lion who moves out his claws before it kills its prey.

„Go, go, go!”, Fugukawe screams.

„What's going on here?”, Sanjib says.

Fugukawe enters the house with the police officers. With the help of Fugukawe they overwhelm Sanjib.

„What are you doing? You will pay for that! I'm one of the most successful Indian TV stars!”

„So? I think your payment will be much higher than mine. I arrest you for sexual abuse, grievous bodily harm, drug use and attempted murder.”, Fugukawe answers.

„You dirty little bitch snitches on me? I never thought I would go that far.”, Sanjib says with the sight of a murderer.

She doesn't answer him. She just gazes after him when he was brought to the police car.

„Thank you so much detective! Thank you!”, Bhadra says happily.

„That's my job. Leave the rest to us. You just have to testify in court in a few weeks. We keep in

touch.”, the Japanese detective says and walks towards his car.

In the next days Sanjib realizes that his curtain was disrupted. His success got to his head and he didn't know how to handle his popularity. So he hid in the dream world of his drugs. So the lion failed. At the height of its hunt. Beaten by his own golden life.

## **The Street Kid's Tale**

*by Pascal Pilgram*

“He beat her again and again. I could not believe, what was just happening in front of my eyes. It was my 10<sup>th</sup> birthday, but Dad wouldn't stop yelling. 'Why can't you do what I told you to for once, Alaja. ONCE!!!' I have never seen Mum cry like that before. I started to feel very angry about Dad. And that was when I knew I would have to escape from Dad and make a living on my own.

So this is basically, why I got here.” Gürhan pauses and stays lost in his mind for a few seconds. “So how'd you get here then?” Theresa Fürst – a German looking, strange policewoman – asks a very sharp and unfriendly voice.

“Well, you gotta know: even though I was ten, I have always been a smart, mature and tough boy. So don't even think you can mess with ME. OK, back to the point: I was able to create a plan of escaping with Mum on my own. I figured out it would be best to catch a moment, when Dad has gone for at least one hour. I would immediately tell Mum, that she's gotta get away from Dad and follow my instructions for the flight from Dad.

So one day Dad just went out for a little walk with our little puppy. I think it was two or three weeks after the little incident at my birthday. My heart turned into a little cricket ball jumping from the one side of my heart to the other and I immediately started sweating like a bullock. I knew this is the moment. 'Mum, Mum!!' I called her. 'For the next 10 hours or till we have a place to sleep you will listen to me and don't ask any questions, ok? We're going, so get what you really need and follow me, understand?' She looked at me, as if there was a monkey standing in front of her talking like a normal human being. But then she realised, that it was the only way to go for us. She gathered all her stuff and waited at the front door. As we entered our freedom outside, we made four or five careful steps to see, if we're getting observed, but then ran our feet off for like 5 kilometres and it felt so good.

As I also figured out earlier, it would be hard to find a place to stay now. So we talked to some little street kids at possibly the age of 10, just like me, but way younger mentally. I told them, they should show us, where they live and that they would have to offer us a home. As I knew those two rats, Ranjid and Merhaba – they introduced their selves – were too servile to stand up against me and followed my instructions. So they brought us here in this stinky, dirty, ugly place, where we had to live from this time on.”

“Oh well, poor you. Your case will be very interesting; I’ll come see you again some time, Gürhan.” Gürhan doesn’t miss to catch a careless moment from Miss Fürst and steals her suitcase before she goes off. He opens it and finds a document about the local police officer. As Gürhan reads through it, he feels satisfaction for all the pain he has gone through. In this little letter some very deep abysses get revealed about Officer Mr. Bhrasta. “This is my life insurance!!” Gürhan shouts. It says he wouldn’t have made it to such a high position, if he didn’t kill the former one and didn’t do business with the Indian mafia. Gürhan would have to blackmail Mr. Bhrasta with his knowledge, so that he gets a big amount of money.

So Gürhan sends a message to Mr. Bhrasta as an anonymous person and sets a meeting for the handing over. Mr. Bhrasta, in fear to lose his job and go to jail, appears at the arranged time – but without a single rupee! “Come out, stranger! I have something better to offer you than money. You won’t be disappointed. Trust me!” Gürhan hesitates and stays in the shade. “Listen! My offer is better than any amount of money I could raise. So come out of your little hiding place!” Getting more and more interested Gürhan takes the risk and steps out of the bushes. Bhrasta’s reaction to that kid standing in front of him is amazement. Suddenly he starts laughing at Gürhan: “Hahaha you small miserable creature wanted to blackmail me. Hahaha you have a good sense of humour little one. But actually your braveness should pay off. So now to my offer: Apparently you have a source which shouldn’t exist, so I offer you to be my personal assistant and much more money than you expected from me. Kolkata is just a big, dirty, ugly hole of slumdogs, so why not making money with it, hm? What do you say?” “Obviously this is an offer I can’t miss, so we’re in business now, Mr. Bhrasta.” They shake hands and their contract is signed.

For the next six years Gürhan and his mum Alaja wouldn’t have to worry about a home and money. They lived a high life and enjoyed their comfort.

But the day would come, where Gürhan has to make a visit at Lal Basar – the beggar place of his former neighbours Ranjid and Merhaba. “This little bastard has actually made it to become the second highest police officer of Kolkata and he’s just 16. But he does not deserve the money and this life.” Ranjid sprints off with an arm-long knife. Gürhan – just talking to another beggar – turns around and the knife drills into his chest. The last feeling you could see in his eyes was pure hatred. “You stinky... little... bastard.....” The last words of Officer Gürhan were spoken.

This was the story of a corrupt street kid, which made it to a high standard of living. But the disgraceful way of getting there paid off at last.

## **The Brother's Tale**

*by Tolga Özcan*

It's a cloudy Thursday morning. Anis Youssef Mohamed is walking towards the impressive entrance of the Diamond® Hotel in Kolkata - His hotel chain including 22 hotels is one of the biggest and most profitable in India.

Although he wears an Armani suit and sunglasses of a brand whose name he can't even

pronounce, no one notices him pacing through the foyer on the way to his office in the 76<sup>th</sup> floor. But he doesn't care. That's not the reason for his discontent.

It is a day like every day in the hell of greed. He has a meeting with a city council for getting a permission to build another hotel.

„Anis my friend I hope you know that it won't be cheap to build a hotel amidst an occupied slum.“ said the city council demandingly. He keeps quiet, winks and hands him a suitcase full of money. “20 million rupees?” Anis nods.

When he glances on the city map, he realizes that the hotel will be built in Gaji Pukur, the place where he lived the first two years of his life.

*He lived there with his parents and his 4 brothers in poor circumstances. One of them is his twin, Ekrem Bora. In the age of two the twins were sent to a children's home because their parents couldn't feed all of them. It was like ripping their hearts off at that time, but later they realized it was their salvation. All of the other brothers died because of hunger and diseases.*

While walking out the door his feelings overcome Anis. Everything he sees reminds him of the rich western world which he once hated- and he still does. Big buildings based on a foundation of corruption and unscrupulousness stamped out of the earth in the last years. Deep down in his soul he always hated his job, the way he was getting rich and himself for doing what he's doing. And when he thinks about betraying his principles, it feels like someone's ramming a dagger right through his heart.

He calls one of the countless cabs but he has to share it with another guy- like it's usual at this time of day.

The local radio station is reporting about a slumdog, who won 20 million rupees on “Who wants to be a millionaire”. The boy makes him think about his brother...

*The time in the children's home made their relationship strong, but in the age of 7 the twins were separated. Anis was brought to a rich foster family while his brother Ekrem wasn't that lucky and had to stay in the children's home. Since then not a single day passed in which Anis hadn't the feeling of being devoured by his sense of guilt because he left his brother alone.*

The guy who sits next to him in the taxi looks like one of these Hindus, who believe themselves to be something better just because of their origin or religion.

*He never trusted these improper Hindus, but especially since this mendacious Hindu judge sent his brother into jail for 9 years just because he stole food that he needed to survive in this unequal world, he developed an abysmal hatred against them.*

“Where to go mister?” asks the cab driver politely.

“Kolkata High Court, Esplanade Row West.”

Suddenly the Hindu takes a surprised look at Anis: “Oh what a coincidence! My father is judge at this courthouse! What do you want there?”

Anis considers him with a condescending view and grumbles: “I want justice for everyone.”



The Hindu seems a bit irritated and while looking at Anis backpack he takes out his mobile phone and talks excited to someone in Hindi so that Anis can't understand what he is saying, then he asks the cab driver to stop, pays and gets off the taxi.

"Strange young man" says the cab driver and continues their way to the courthouse.

*At the time of his brothers condemnation he promised revenge and he never breaks a promise.*

Anis gets off the taxi, pays the friendly cab driver and takes a last look on the city that made him be someone he hates. With determined steps, he enters the courthouse and goes straight to room 34. He pulls a machine gun and kills the two guards standing before the entrance to the court room. Then he opens the door and runs straight to the judges desk and shouts "Now the world no longer can look away!"...

## **The Student's Tale**

*by Narin Demir and Hannah Ballantyne*

Fuck. My pencil broke. Not even that seems to work!

Sitting here at the campus of Calcutta University and drawing, although it doesn't take me anywhere, makes me even more angry... it isn't anger it feels more like sadness. I never thought that my father would really quit paying my University fees just because it's not what he wants me to study. Artists can have good jobs. David La Chapel makes more money than hundred depressed doctors from the slums of Calcutta together. No one would like to end up like them. He wouldn't have wanted me to end up like one of them - depressed and unsuccessful. But that is how I'm going to end up anyway since that day.

Every taxi passing by makes me think of what happened. I know it's not my fault but I could have tried harder. I shared a taxi with my father's murderer and sat right next to him while he told his complice how to kill him. When I called him three minutes later he treated me like always. I was never good enough for him and I think that he didn't really listen to what I was saying. He just answered: "Alright son, I'll call you later". But there was no later. And now there is no later for me.

I take my out my sharpener and drink out my cup and I see her. I spit out the coffee because I burned my tongue. Actually I don't know if it was my coffee that is so hot or her. She looks at me and starts laughing. "Maljah Likmah-Khan!! Were you dreaming again?". I recognized Katila, the girl from yesterday. She tried to rob me when i was caught in my daydreams, but failed when she fell over. She dropped her bracelet with her name on it, but couldn't grab it before I did. I ran after her and handed it back to her. She was relieved and we got to know each other.

What was she doing here?

-"Kind of. Who are you trying to rob here? A poor student?"

- "Haha. I was looking for you."

- "What do you want?"

- "Come with me! Let's have lunch together."

I take my books and we leave. We walk half an hour through crowded and noisy streets that I have never seen before and finally end up in front of a rotten cafe that looks like a shed bombed in war.

We enter and drink coffee while I tell her everything about my situation. She seems especially interested in my father, his career and what had happened to him. Some time later I find myself in her little hut in the slums of Calcutta. I have never seen such a horrible place before but it is better spending a night here with this beautiful girl than sleeping on the streets.

I wake up the next day and she is gone.

I start collecting my clothes and the stuff I had with me when suddenly I recognize that all the money and other worthy stuff I had with me was gone.

But then I notice I'm not alone. When I see the first man he sees me and I feel something strong like metal in my stomach, but it was his fist.

Two other men come aside him and they didn't treat me kindly either.

When I wake up again, I start running through the slums. I have no idea which direction and it's possible that I'm running in circles but I don't care. I'm just too afraid. It's only when I am totally worn out when I sit on a rusted tin and take some breath.

I look up and see a commercial of my father

and I say: "See father, if you wouldn't have been so closed-minded I wouldn't have ended up beaten in the slums."